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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANTANANARIVO 000444

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/E - MBEYZEROV
PARIS FOR RKANEDA
LONDON FOR PLORD

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MA](#)
SUBJECT: MADAGASCAR: SADC POSITION MUST CHANGE

REF: A. ANTANANARIVO 428
[1](#)B. STATE 45783

Classified By: AMBASSADOR NIELS MARQUARDT FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND D.

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: This is an action request; please see paragraph 3. International mediators from the African Union, the United Nations, and the Francophonie (OIF) formally suspended negotiations between Madagascar's four main political movements on June 16. They fear that the upcoming SADC Summit on Madagascar, scheduled for June 21 in South Africa, may generate another unhelpfully rigid and unrealistic SADC statement, which we ask that embassies in SADC capitals again help prevent. The SADC position continues to be led unhelpfully by Swaziland, whose King reportedly has rejected the recommendation of his own Envoy to back away from the March 30 SADC statement calling for the reinstatement (by force if necessary) of former President Marc Ravalomanana. In a meeting today with local representatives of the International Contact Group on Madagascar (ICG-M), the mediators announced that they have requested that the AU convene a meeting of the ICG-M in either Addis Ababa or, more likely, in Paris (to be hosted by the OIF), before the AU Summit in Syrte meets on July 1. We recommend that the USG be represented at at the AF/AS or DAS level, if indeed the meeting is scheduled. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) In a press conference on June 16, the three mediators stressed their intention to remain engaged in Madagascar's political crisis, but called on the four intransigent political movements to reconsider their positions. Negotiations have been held hostage for over three weeks by the Ratsiraka delegation's demands for a preliminary amnesty (reftel A), but the pro-Ravalomanana (TIM/Legalists) and transition government (HAT) delegations were doing little to help. Pressured by the Legalists (from within their own delegation) to reach a settlement, the TIM representatives had grown desperate to obtain a deal on Ravalomanana's right to return and his role in the transition, while the HAT delegation has refused for over a week to consider amnesty separately from the rest of the Transition Charter. In this context, the mediators' move to suspend talks was a realistic assessment of the parties' extremely low chances of reaching agreement in the near term. It is not clear that this pause will ultimately result in an increased willingness to compromise, as the mediators hope, but it does put the international community on a more honest footing as to the state of international efforts to resolve this crisis.

[1](#)3. (C) Action request: SADC heads of state will meet on Sunday, June 21 in South Africa to discuss Madagascar. Although recent statements from Swaziland and Zimbabwe indicate lingering support for a military solution to reinstate Ravalomanana, we know that SADC is divided: South Africa, for one, is firmly opposed to such an option. In

support of the ICG-M and the ongoing search for a peaceful solution, post requests that the Department initiate another urgent demarche to all SADC member governments, reinforcing more or less the points previously delivered in reftel B, from May 5.

¶4. (U) Following are suggested points for delivery to SADC member governments, updated from reftel B to reflect the current situation:

-- Express appreciation for SADC's strong stance against the unconstitutional change of power in Madagascar.

-- Stress our aim to support SADC, the AU, the Francophonie and the UN in coordinated efforts to create a consensual, negotiated process leading to elections before the end of ¶2009. Emphasize elections as the only legitimate way to return Madagascar to constitutional order.

-- Note that Ravalomanana still speaks openly about the possibility of a "SADC Brigade" restoring him to power, a suggestion which has been reinforced by recent statements from the leaders of Swaziland and Zimbabwe, and in the recent COMESA Summit Communiqué. These statements, expectations and perceptions are not realistic or helpful and should be discouraged.

-- Explain our conviction that support for the forceful reinstatement of Marc Ravalomanana is an impediment to promoting political dialogue and change in Madagascar, as it removes any incentive for Ravalomanana or his supporters to work seriously towards early new elections - as has been

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demonstrated over the past three months since SADC suspended Madagascar as a member.

-- To support the peaceful resolution of this crisis, suggest that SADC issue a statement strongly and unambiguously calling for all Malagasy parties to rejoin the negotiating table, with no reference to an alternative military option. This will help unlock the way forward to elections before the end of 2009.

-- Reinforce our agreement with the June 16 AU/UN/OIF statement, asserting that the international community will not support a unilateral solution to end this crisis, and that any such effort is not likely to succeed. Negotiations have been suspended temporarily, but the international community will remain engaged in hopes that each of the four political movements will use this opportunity to reconsider their positions, and return to negotiations prepared to compromise.

¶5. (C) The mediators have requested that the AU convene a meeting of the ICG-M before the AU Summit, possibly to be hosted by the OIF in Paris (and possibly timed to allow travellers en route to Syrte to attend en route). We recommend that the USG attend this meeting at the AF A/S ort DAS level. The goal of the ICG meeting is to reinforce the message that a consensus-based political solution remains the only viable option in this crisis. They also hope to shore up international support before the AU Summit July 1-3. The experience of successive SADC and AU meetings indicates that the SADC position from June 21, whatever it is, will weigh heavily on any subsequent AU discussion or statement. It is thus crucial to engage key member states on this issue this week. Mediators today requested such assistance from the Perm 5, the EU, Germany, and South Africa, as well as from the UN Secretariat. The mediators intend to visit SADC countries but clearly will not be able to do so before this Summit. They also noted, and seem to accept, that SADC has shown no interest in inviting them to make any presentation at the Summit. With the Swazi King reportedly having rejected the report and advice of SADC Special Envoy (and former Swazi Prime Minister) Absalom Thamba Dlamini, it is

unclear that the heads of state will hear any unbiased,
pro-Ravalomanana views unless they hear them in demarches
from us and any others who decide to engage.

MARQUARDT